

Rhodora

JOURNAL OF

THE NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL CLUB

Vol. 26.

September, 1924.

No. 309.

A NOTE ON STELLARIA PUBERA MICHX.

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AN attempt to name accurately a *Stellaria* found growing as an introduced plant at Wilton, Conn., by Miss Anna E. Carpenter and persistent there for at least six years, has involved me in a survey of the forms referred to *S. pubera*, which, though necessarily somewhat cursory, has yielded results perhaps worth recording. Through the kindness of Dr. W. R. Maxon, I have had the privilege of examining the material of *S. pubera* in the United States National Herbarium; and Mr. C. C. Deam has generously lent me the fine representation of the species in his private herbarium.

Although varying much in leaf-form, the great majority of specimens from east of the Alleghanies are constant in the following characters. The median leaves of the flowering stems are sessile or subsessile and not over 4 cm. long. The larger, oblong-lanceolate to broadly oval leaves of the sterile shoots are likewise sessile or subsessile. The sepals are 4–5 mm. long (rarely a little longer), broadly ovate to oblong-ovate or rarely oblong-lanceolate, obtuse to acutish, and, though often pilose on the back, are not ciliate or only slightly and inconspicuously so at the very base. They are usually shorter than the petals. This common form is, as indicated by Michaux's description and his type locality, no doubt typical *S. pubera*.

At scattered stations nearly throughout the range of the species occur larger plants in which the oblong-lanceolate to broadly oval median leaves of the few-flowered fertile stems are 6–11 cm. long and the sepals generally 5–6 mm. long. This is *Alsine pubera* ten-

nesseensis Mohr, as shown by his description and his type specimen (now in the U. S. Nat. Herb.) collected at Sheffield Landing, Ala., June, 1893, and labelled "*v. tennesseensis*" by him.

The status of this form is not wholly clear to me; but the specimens at hand appear to be either luxuriant individuals or late, semi-sterile shoots. The latter interpretation is borne out by the following facts. Some of the specimens, including Mohr's type, were collected in June and July, well past the usual flowering time of the species. A sheet collected near Baltimore, Md., July 7, 1897 (U. S.), is labelled by the collector, Adam Seitz, "*Stellaria pubera* Michx. in its second form." A specimen collected at Waynesville, N. C., by T. G. Harbison in May, 1897 (G), shows a large-leaved shoot in flower and two stems of entirely typical *S. pubera* in immature fruit proceeding from the same root. From the data at hand, I cannot see that this form deserves any taxonomic recognition.

West of the Alleghanies, ranging (so far as the specimens seen indicate) from northern Alabama to southern Ohio and southeastern Indiana, is found a much more marked variant. In it at least the lower leaves of the flowering stems and all but the uppermost leaves of the sterile ones have the oval to broadly ovate blades abruptly contracted into margined petioles or petiolar bases 1-2 cm. long. The sepals are 7.5-11 mm. long, acute or acuminate; they equal or exceed the petals and at least the outer are conspicuously long-ciliate on the lower half. This, as shown by the description and collections cited, is *Stellaria pubera*, subsp. *silvatica* Béguinot. Small's excellent diagnosis leaves no doubt that it is also his *Alsine tennesseensis*, to which he has erroneously applied Mohr's name.

The characters of pubescence and leaf-form adduced by Béguinot do not correlate in a large series of specimens; those of calyx and leaves, however, are associated with a high degree of consistency. The plant constitutes a well-marked geographic variety. Perhaps it even deserves the specific rank accorded it by Small; but its characters seem hardly positive enough for that. Occasional individuals of otherwise typical *S. pubera* show a tendency to develop petiolar leaf-bases; in a few cases the sepals are narrow, acute, and more or less ciliate; and in length of sepals different specimens show an unbroken progression from 5 to 11 mm. One plant in particular, collected by A. H. Curtiss in Fairfax Co., Va. (G), and showing ovate,

short-petioled leaves and broadly ovate, somewhat ciliate sepals 7 mm. long, is almost exactly intermediate between species and variety.

I have not been able to identify Béguinot's subsp. *homotricha*.

The conclusions here reached may be summarized as follows. Prof. Fernald (RHODORA xxi. 7-9 [1919]) has well set forth the reasons why the generic name *Stellaria* is to be preferred to *Alsine* for the species of this group.

* Median leaves of both sterile and flowering shoots rounded or narrowed at the sessile or subsessile base, oblong-lanceolate to oval; sepals 4-6 mm. long, obtuse or acutish, shorter than the petals, not at all or only inconspicuously ciliate.

STELLARIA PUBERA Michx. Fl. Bor. Am. i. 273 (1803). *Alsine pubera tennesseensis* Mohr, Cont. Nat. Herb. vi. 499 (1901). *Alsine tennesseensis* Small, Fl. S. E. U. S. 422 (1903), as to name-bringing synonym.—N. J. to Ind., south to Ga. and Ala.

** Median leaves of sterile shoots abruptly contracted into petioles 1-2 cm. long, oval to broadly ovate; sepals 7.5-11 mm. long, acute or acuminate, equalling or exceeding the petals, at least the outer conspicuously ciliate on the lower half.

Var. **silvatica** (Béguinot), n. comb. *S. pubera*, subsp. *silvatica* Bég. Nuov. Giorn. Bot. Ital. n. s. xvii. 385 (1910). *Alsine tennesseensis* Small, l. c., as to plant described.—CONNECTICUT (where introduced); dooryard, Wilton, April, 1923, Anna E. Carpenter (G). OHIO: Chillicothe, May, 1885, H. T. Safford (US); near Cincinnati, April 27, 1879, C. G. Lloyd (US). INDIANA: wooded ravine near Lawrenceburgh, Dearborn Co., May 10, 1910, Deam (herb. C. C. Deam). KENTUCKY: cliffs of the Kentucky River, May, 1830, H. H. Eaton (G). TENNESSEE: bluffs along the Tennessee River, Knoxville, April, 1894, S. N. Bain (US); same locality, April, 1895, Ruth (G).

GRAY HERBARIUM.

THE NAME OF THE SPEARMINT.

S. F. BLAKE.

IN a recent paper in this journal, Mr. O. A. Farwell¹ has sought to show that the name *Mentha spicata* L., in general use for the spearmint for many years, belongs to the horse mint of Europe, usually called *M. longifolia*, and that the spearmint should be called *M. viridis*. In this interpretation of the Linnaean name Farwell departs

¹ "The correct name for the spearmint," RHODORA 26: 19-22. 1924.